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# **Socialism and War**

**UPTON SINCLAIR**

**ROBERT BLATCHFORD**

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# SOCIALISM & WAR

## A MANIFESTO AGAINST IT

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An Appeal to the Socialist Movement

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By UPTON SINCLAIR

COMRADES,—The writer of this article begs for a hearing upon what he believes to be the most important question now confronting the Socialist movement. Being comparatively a novice in the work, he approaches the task with a good deal of diffidence—involving, as it does, the necessity of opposing the opinions of many of the oldest and most experienced members of the Party: men who have given their whole lives to the cause. He can only say that he is writing under the pressure of a most profound conviction, and after much earnest study and thought. He is sending this article to a representative journal in each of the twelve countries to which he makes his appeal. In asking for publication and discussion of it, he presumes upon a sentiment of friendly interest, of which he has had much evidence from the Socialists of these countries, in the form of reviews of his books and of letters from individuals.

His purpose is to discuss the question of war and the attitude which the Party is to take concerning it.

## **The Brotherhood of Labour.**

Modern Capitalism is a world-wide phenomenon, and modern Socialism is essentially and of necessity international. It is not conceivable that any nation could achieve industrial freedom if the nations surrounding it remained sunk in reaction. The Social Revolution involves the overthrow of the military caste and the rejection of the military ideal. And we can plead our cause only because we know that the Revolution, once started, will spread like wild-fire throughout the entire domain of Capitalism; that when we throw down our arms and extend the hands of brotherhood to our neighbours we shall find our neighbours ready to respond. The appeal of Socialism is, therefore, an appeal to the working class of the world, regardless of race prejudices and national boundaries; it is an assertion by the working class of every nation, not only of their own right to liberty and self-government, but of their willingness to grant this right to the working class of every other nation. This propaganda of international solidarity and universal brotherhood is the very soul of our movement. We cannot depart from it in any detail, nor under any circumstances, without ceasing to be Socialists and abandoning our cause.

## **The Cunning of Capitalism.**

We are ourselves products of Capitalism, and perils and temptations beset us. It would be strange if the distrusts and animosities of the system of savagery in which we are pent, and under which we are obliged to find our means of life, did not sometimes tempt us. It would be strange if we were not disposed now and then to realise more vividly the evils of foreign despotisms than of those at home. Our ruling classes are not slow to tempt us in this way, knowing, as they do, that the hatred of the ruling classes of other nations is the only sentiment which we have in common with them; and that to sound the war-drums and frighten us with alarms is the only argument they can advance to keep themselves in power. Under the strain of such tempta-

tions there has been, here and there, some sign of weakening within our movement. And this partial success of our insidious enemies has seemed to me one of the most disquieting symptoms of the time. For what shall it profit us if we gain our national safety and lose the soul of Comradeship which is the thing by which we live—our guidon in the battle and our sure title to the crown of victory?

### **Who are the Aggressors?**

What is the meaning of this talk about "wars of aggression" among Socialists? Is it a war of aggression upon the part of the proletariat of one nation against that of another nation? But how can such a thing be when the proletariat of no nation has any share in the making of wars? The rivalries and jealousies which lead to wars of aggression are those of the militarists and the money-changers of the different lands. And are we to lend ourselves as their tools? Are we to be marshalled for battle in their service? If so—if the Socialist leaders can be awed by their power, if the Socialist masses can be swayed by their passions, then we might as well give up our struggle at the outset. For of what use is it to arouse the people if, whenever their threats become dangerous, it is only necessary to pick a quarrel abroad? Rest assured that our masters will not be blind to this device, and will not be lacking in occasions!

### **Refusal to Fight.**

Surely, comrades, this issue is upon us for our decision. If our movement is not to be drowned in a sea of our own blood, it must be because we have foreseen this peril and set ourselves to combat it. It must be because we, the peoples of all nations, we who fight the wars and pay for them with our tears and anguish—because we take counsel together and resolve that under no circumstances will we permit it, that under no circumstances will we be led out to slaughter our fellow-men; that come what may and cost what it may, we will not see the red pestilence of war swoop over the civilised world!

## **No Cause for War.**

I assert it as a certain truth that modern civilised peoples do not desire wars. I assert that there is not anywhere among progressive nations sufficient international hatred to lead even to serious talk of war. I assert that wherever it appears that the proletariat is clamouring for war it will always be found that the inciting cause is the money-interest of sensational newspapers, unscrupulous politicians, and exploiting syndicates. It is the capitalists and aristocrats who desire wars and who profit by them; and those of foreign countries are no less our oppressors because their influence over us is indirect. When these capitalists seek to lead their wage-slaves into a war with us, shall we answer them by rushing to take up arms against them? Shall we not rather say to these conspirators, "We know that your wage-slaves will not permit you to drive them to this atrocity. The wage-slaves of your country are our comrades; we have met with them in council, and they have pledged their faith with us. And we will trust them; we will call upon them, in the name of human brotherhood and our sacred cause, to refuse this service for which they are summoned, and to turn their arms against their own oppressors"?

## **What Do We Believe?**

Let us face this issue fairly. Either we believe in the brotherhood of the working classes or we do not believe in it. If we do believe in it, we must act upon it, and follow our convictions to their logical conclusion. There can be no half-way course in such a matter; we cannot carry in one hand the bloody sword of war and in the other the gospel of solidarity. Either we must train ourselves for killing men or for converting them. And rest assured that in the hour of crisis nothing but our training will save us. In that hour the war-dogs will be unleashed and a red fury will seize upon the people! and if we are to save ourselves, it will not do to hesitate and parley, to make objections and to take half-way steps. If we are even to make ourselves heard at all, it will only be because we have

chosen our course far in advance; because we have educated and trained our people for just this emergency; because we have made up our minds and chosen our course, and vowed ourselves for life or death: because we are ready to leap into action and labour with every faculty we possess to prevent the consummation of this supreme atrocity of Capitalism.

### **We Are Internationalists.**

Let us not be troubled by the sneer that we are men without a country. We answer that we have a country whose boundaries extend to wherever a human being is struggling for justice and for light. And so we have done once for all with this hyena of Militarism. We will hear no talk about dangers of attack upon us by civilised peoples. We declare once for all that there never can be such a thing as a war of aggression upon us on the part of any such people. The war, if it comes, will be a quarrel among our economic exploiters; and in it we will take no part—neither with voice and pen, nor with gun and bayonet. On the contrary, we will oppose it by every means in our power; in pulpit and Press and forum, in public meetings and in street processions; and in countries where our masters presume to forbid such things, by insurrection and the general strike. When the war mutterings are first heard, we will make it our business to seek out our comrades in the country which is supposed to threaten us, and will come to an understanding with them as to the real cause of the quarrel; and then, by means of our Party organisation and Press, we will spread these facts before our comrades. We will address manifestoes and appeals in the name of humanity to the peoples of both nations. We will ourselves refuse to serve in armies or to pay taxes to the Government; and we will do all in our power to urge others to such steps. For we declare that war between civilised nations is the crime of crimes, and that no action can be wrong which helps to prevent it, and no obedience can be right which involves acquiescence in it.

## **The Cost of Armaments.**

At the present time every great nation in the world is engaged in heaping up the machinery of slaughter. Every year the burden of taxation grows greater, every year sees an increase in unemployment and discontent. And what is to be the issue of it all? Anyone can see that it cannot go on for ever. It is like a bubble blown by a child at play: sooner or later the bubble must burst. And can we believe that the military caste of any nation will permit itself to be overthrown without making some attempt to invoke the old gods of nationalism, without making some attempt to use the engines of war which it has constructed?

## **Let Us Be Ready.**

Comrades, as certain as the Socialist movement exists is the fact that it is destined to culminate in such a crisis as this, and to find its hour of deliverance amid the crash of arms. Even though we may decree otherwise, the force of events will be too strong for us; we shall be forced to protest against the murder of our comrades, and our exploiters will be forced to turn back and crush us. We shall then be face to face with all the savagery of repression; and if ever the war goes forward after that, it will only go forward over the dead body of the proletarian revolt. We have, therefore, no choice except as to how we shall meet this emergency, whether prepared and disciplined, or reluctant and with divided counsels.

## **The Teaching of History.**

Somewhat over a century ago the people of France became the heralds of a new dispensation of freedom, and immediately all the forces of reaction in the rest of Europe were set at work to crush her. In England the opposition was throttled; the few solitary voices of democracy were gaoled and persecuted and the nation plunged into war. So the humanitarianism of Rousseau was turned into the militarism of Napoleon, and civilisation was harried by twenty years of hideous and desolating slaughter,



the effects of which may be traced to this day in every nation that took part in it.

### **War is the Enemy.**

It is to save our civilisation from another such *débâcle* that the Socialist movement exists. And the enemy of enemies against which we have to prepare ourselves is War. So long as peace can be maintained we are safe. Irresistibly the light is spreading; the people are awakening, and our movement grows hour by hour. It is only when the blind frenzy of War is permitted to seize the people that it is possible for reaction to make any headway. It is by War that the sham prosperity of Capitalism is kept up and the pressure of population relieved. It is by War that all our miseries are perpetuated and all our hopes aborted. And we have not awakened to the realities of the situation until we have made it the central truth of our propaganda that War is the enemy of Socialism and Socialism is the enemy of War.

### **The Patriotic Socialists.**

You answer me, comrades: "Our movement has recognised all this; our Party proceedings are full of the most radical declarations against War." And this I know. But it is not words that are wanted: it is actions; and the reason for my appeal is that in some countries the movement has been unwilling to commit itself to a thoroughgoing resolve for *action* in this matter. We have heard the heroic leader of our German comrades declare in an International Congress that the Socialists of his country would take up arms in defence of the Fatherland. We have heard some of the most trusted spokesmen of our cause in England discussing the peril of an invasion by Germany, and the need of resisting it by force of arms. And since this article was first penned, while I was seeking the advice of friends about it, a perfect frenzy of militarism has swept England into a debauch of battleship building, and seems to have infected like a fever the whole civilised world.

## **A Nightmare of Dread.**

Comrades, it is nothing but deeds that will help us in this crisis; it is nothing but a resolute determination for deeds that will in the least affect our enemies. Socialism is not a theory of government, but an act of will; if it comes to be, it will be because we create it; and if we permit ourselves to hesitate and doubt, then the power to create it is gone from us. It is this conviction which weighs upon me—this vision which haunts me like a nightmare, and will not let me rest; that the Socialist movement has power at this hour to prevent war between civilised nations if it will only resolve to prevent it. You—a Socialist—who permit yourself to deny to say, Yes, we might, if others would—you yourself are a cause of War. Wars are waged because men are willing to die to wage them; and wars will continue to be waged until men are willing to die to prevent them. Just as gladiatorial combats ceased when Christian monks were willing to throw themselves into the arena, so the pageantry of militarism will advance until lovers of humanity are willing to throw themselves beneath the hoofs of the cavalry.

## **America's Happy Immunity.**

It may be said that such resolves may be safely taken in a country which, of all countries, is least threatened by War. I can but bow my head to this accusation. But it is the unhappy truth that reaction is fast closing its grip upon America; and unless I am mistaken the time will not be long before the young Socialists of my own country will have ample opportunity to demonstrate the temper of their hearts.

## **The Time to Act is Now.**

We are told that the movement is yet too weak—that we must wait for evolution. But evolution is working in the hearts of men; we are its instruments, and if we do not struggle there is no evolution. We are told that the movement would be crushed out; but I declare my faith that the crushing

out of any rebellion which sought, from motive of sublime humanity, to prevent war would be the greatest victory that Socialism has ever gained—would shake the conscience of civilisation and rouse the workers of the world as nothing in all history has yet done. Let us not be too fearful for our movement, nor put too much stress upon numbers and the outward appearances of power. A thousand men aglow with faith and determination are stronger than a million grown cautious and respectable; and there is no danger to the Socialist movement so great as the danger of becoming an established institution.

### **A Conference Wanted.**

In this article it has not been my purpose to denounce all wars, nor to advocate any doctrine of non-resistance. I have not been discussing the attitude of subject nations toward their conquerors, of civilised nations toward savage nations, nor toward nations in which political freedom has not been realised. I grant that in the case of imperfectly-evolved nations, where the people are ignorant and helpless—I grant that against the ruling class of such nations it is necessary to be prepared for defence. But I say that in the case of any nation where education is widespread, and where the voice of the people may make itself heard in a great crisis—I say that against such a nation the only weapon which we employ is the Socialist ideal. Without making any implication against countries not named, I specify the United States and Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden as being beyond question in this class; and it is my claim that war between any of these nations would be a crime against the human race. I declare that the Socialists of these countries should formally ratify treaties and covenants, pledging themselves—their time and their fortunes, and, if need be, their lives—to prevent this crime from being committed. They should name representatives, who, at the least sign of misunderstanding between two nations,

should meet and come to an agreement as to the true significance of the issue from the point of view of the working class. In the case of actual danger of war, they should issue an appeal to the peoples involved, and should call upon the Party in those countries to name delegates to an emergency convention. If the Socialists are to act with any force in such a crisis, it must be upon a mutual agreement as to the issues involved ; and we should no more leave the work of creating the machinery of such agreement until the time of the dispute than our masters should leave the building of warships and the drilling of battalions until the declaration of war.

# THE GRIM LOGIC OF FACTS

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An Answer to Upton Sinclair

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By ROBERT BLATCHFORD

UPTON SINCLAIR'S well-meant article has one fatal defect: it magnifies the power of the Socialist Party in political affairs.

Let us quit theories and come to facts. Mr. Sinclair calls upon the Socialists of the world to prevent wars. We will begin with the nearest and most dangerous situation: the situation between this country and Germany.

Suppose I am right in assuming that Germany is preparing to make war upon Britain. How are the British and German Socialists to prevent it?

Does Mr. Sinclair suggest that British Socialists should try to prevent the British Government from preparing to resist attack?

To that course there are two objections:

- (1) The Socialists of Britain are not strong enough to prevent the Government from preparing for defence.
- (2) If the Socialists were strong enough to stop the preparations for defence, that would not prevent war: it would only hasten it.

If Germany means to attack us, will she be less likely to attack us because she knows that we are too weak to offer an effectual resistance?

But perhaps Mr. Sinclair means that the German Socialists should prevent the German Government from making war upon Britain.

The German Socialists are not strong enough to

prevent war. The German Socialists are not strong enough to hinder the expansion of German naval power. There is yet another alternative. Perhaps Mr. Sinclair means that the Socialists of Germany and Britain should make a concerted and organised effort to prevent war. I say again, they are too weak.

There is only one method by which the Socialists could attempt to avert the coming horror: that is, the method of stopping the growth of German naval power. In such an effort the British Socialists could not help them, so that this alternative must be reduced to the same form as its predecessor; it becomes merely an attempt by the Socialists of Germany to stop the building of German ships of war.

We in this country can do nothing in that direction. Our Government tried to arrange for a limitation of naval armaments, and failed.

Now, does any Socialist believe, will any German Socialist maintain, that the German Socialist Party could prevent the increase of German naval power?

The German Socialists would be defeated, overpowered, if they attempted such a thing.

The last German Naval Bill passed without opposition from any Party.

This being the case, I ask Mr. Sinclair what it is we are to do.

The British people do not want war; the German people do not want war; yet the two nations are marching steadily towards a conflict. Why? Mr. Sinclair himself gives the answer: it is capitalists and militarists who make wars.

That is true. It is also true that the men who hold the money and the arms are the masters. Some day it may not be so; to-day it is so. To-day the Socialists of the world are impotent to prevent the militarists and capitalists of Germany from attacking Britain.

As things are to-day, the only possible means of keeping the peace is by being prepared for war.

Mr. Sinclair greatly exaggerates the power of British Socialism. The British Socialists are enormously outnumbered. They are not militant

people; they are not united; they have no money, no arms, no discipline.

Let Mr. Sinclair take the situation home. Suppose a great Power were arming to attack America; suppose that Power were outbuilding the American naval power; suppose the Socialists of America said, "War is wicked. We must not build battleships to defend ourselves against invasion." What would happen to those Socialists? Does any sane person in America suppose that the American Government or the American people would listen to such counsel?

And suppose the Socialists said, "Then we will prevent you by force from defending the country." What would happen?

If the Socialists of Germany, America, and Britain are too weak to prevent the landlord and the capitalist from robbing, degrading, and starving the workers, how are they going to prevent an organised Power like Germany from building battleships, or from using them?

If the Socialists of Britain tried to-morrow to nationalise the land they would fail. No one pretends that they could succeed. But in a demand for the nationalisation of the land the Socialists would have the support of millions who would oppose any attempt at disarmament.

At present the British people do not believe that Germany is actually preparing for war. But once let that idea become general in this country, and any attempt to interfere with preparations for defence would be crushed out ruthlessly.

Do not let us blind our eyes with theories: let us face the facts. Socialism is not yet nearly strong enough to abolish war.

We are making progress; the idea of international friendship is making progress; but as far as we have got the only way to prevent war is to make ourselves so strong that no other nation will care to attack us.

Mr. Sinclair's article is only a pious opinion, a noble wish. It will not stop the driving of one German rivet, the loading of one British cartridge.

Mr. Sinclair gives it as his conviction that the Socialist movement has power to prevent war



between nations. I wish it had. But it obviously has not; and until that power is gained we have no hope of peace but in the power of the British Fleet.

Too many of our people refuse to see facts. Because they so ardently desire peace, they will not believe in the possibility of war. I am as anxious for peace as any Socialist in the world; but I cannot persuade myself that the Germans are building battleships and destroyers for the sake of protecting their fishermen from erratic Russian cruisers in the North Sea.

Mr. Sinclair quite mistakes the public feeling here. He says in his article:

And since this article was first penned, while I was seeking the advice of friends about it, a perfect frenzy of militarism has swept England into a debauch of battleship building, and seems to have infected like a fever the whole civilised world.

There is no frenzy of militarism in England. The British people never were less military; only a very few are troubling their heads about the danger of war. The great majority are going quietly about their own business or amusements; *they* are not excited; and no argument or persuasion can get them to trouble to learn the use of arms. What the British want is an easy time and a safe time, and a small Army and a big Fleet (at the lowest possible rates) to do their fighting for them. Military frenzy! My word!

Then, as to the "debauch of battleship building." The Government tried to get an understanding with Germany, and got snubbed. Then they reduced and retarded the British building to the verge of danger. There they found that the only result of their patience was that Germany had stolen a march upon us and was building faster than ever. Then, very reluctantly, the Government promised to build for safety.

In my opinion the Government are not yet doing their duty. I believe the danger is greater than we know; that the need is greater than we know; and



that the Government, who *do* know, are afraid to tell the people.

It is no use wasting rhetoric and fine phrases on us. Mr. Sinclair may call our naval programme a debauch if he choose; but such talk has no influence at all with any practical and sensible person.

The debauch is not, in my opinion, sufficient for security. The Government ought to ask for another thirty millions, but they are afraid.

Mr. Sinclair trusts to the Socialists; the Socialists are powerless to avert war. The British Socialists trust to the friendliness of the German people; the German people are powerless to avert war.

When the German military party feel strong enough to fight, the German people will not be consulted, will get no chance to interfere.

I agree with what A. M. Thompson said in the *Clarion* of August 27. It will be a long time before Socialism has become so generally popular that Socialists can avert war. Until that time comes, we must face the grim logic of facts and recognise that war can only be averted by means of a British Navy strong enough and efficient enough to command the seas.

All Socialists are agreed that war is a curse; all Socialists are agreed as to the causes of war; all Socialists are agreed as to the wisdom and the value of international friendship and co-operation. We do not need converting to these beliefs; we have held them for years.

All Socialists are eager to do all that lies in their power to abolish war. But there are some of us who do not hold it wise to rely upon benevolent speeches and civic tea-parties while the Germans are straining every nerve to wrest from us the only weapon we have.

The ideal of universal peace and fraternity is a noble and a beautiful ideal; but the German North Sea Fleet and the German fortifications, harbours, docks, and gun factories are grim facts.

Now, I ask Mr. Sinclair to tell us how the International Socialists can prevent the Germans from attacking Britain when they are ready and feel sure that they can defeat us.

What are we to *do*, we Socialists, to avert the war which is coming upon us, which we have not sought, which we regard with horror?

We British Socialists, for instance, what can we do? We can protest—against what? Not against our own preparations for defence, for they were forced upon us. We can appeal to the British Government, but to what end? The Government do not want war; have done their best to avert war; have only built ships when they dare no longer abstain from building. All we British Socialists can do, then, is to appeal to the German Government to cease their preparations. Would such an appeal make an atom of difference? Would it not be met with contemptuous laughter?

To me it seems that the only right and sensible course for British Socialists to take at this time and in this case is the course some few of us have taken. Our duty is to warn the country of the danger, and to give the Government every possible assistance in their efforts to meet it.

Mr. Sinclair's article is well meant, but does not help us. No words can help us. This is not a time for talk; it is a time for deeds.

Facts, friend Sinclair, are stubborn things; and the German menace is a fact.

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